

Message Text

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52

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 SS-20 PM-07 INR-10

INRE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 DODE-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 L-03

DRC-01 RSC-01 /094 W

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O R 131521Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8787

INFO GOV PANCANAL

USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PN, PQ, PFOR, ETRD, CI, UR

SUBJECT: ATTACHMENT OF SOVIET SHIP IN THE CANAL ZONE

SUMMARY: SOVIET CARGO SHIP WILLIAM FOSTER WAS ATTACHED BY US MARSHALL OCTOBER 12 ON COMPLAINT BY TWO CHILEAN COMPANIES. SHIP IS PRESENTLY AT BALBOA MORINGS AND SHOULD TRANSIT THE CANAL OCTOBER 13. IT WILL BE HELD AT CRISTOBAL ANCHORAGE IF BOND IS NOT ALREADY SET. BASED UPON PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN CASES INVOLVING SOVIET SHIPS, CANAL ZONE AUTHORITIES EXPECT SOVIETS TO POST BOND AND SHIP TO PROCEED WITHOUT DELAY. END SUMMARY.

1. AT 1:15 PM FRIDAY OCTOBER 12, THE U.S. MARSHALL ATTACHED THE SOVIET M/V WILLIAM FOSTER WHICH WAS AT THAT TIME IN THE PACIFIC OUTER ANCHORAGE. THE SHIP HAS SINCE BEEN MOVED TO THE BALBOA MOORING AND IS EXPECTED TO TRANSIT THE CANAL SATURDAY. IT WILL BE HELD AT ANCHOR IN CRISTOBAL HARBOR UNTIL A BOND IS POSTED OR THE COMPLAINT IS SATISFIED OR DISMISSED.

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2. TWO CHILEAN FIRMS, A TEXTILE MANUFACTURER AND A COPPER COMPANY, HAVE CHARGED THAT THE WILLIAM FOSTER WAS TO HAVE DELIVERED TO VALPARAISO 125 TONS OF ELECTROLITIC ZINC AND 2000 BAGS OF CAPROLACTAM, A POWDER USED IN THE MANUFACTURE OF NYLON THREAD. THE COMPANIES CLAIM THAT THEY HAD PAID ALL EXPENSES IN FULL.

3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE LOCAL SHIPPING AGENT, C. FERNIE AND COMPANY, HAS CABLED LENINGRAD FOR INSTRUCTIONS. A LOCAL ATTORNEY, DAVID ROBLES, IS REPRESENTING THE SOVIET CLIENT.

4. IN RECENT ATTACHMENTS INVOLVING SOVIET SHIPS, CANAL ZONE AUTHORITIES REPORT THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE MADE NO CLAIM OF SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY BUT HAVE PREFERRED TO POST BOND QUIETLY AND HAVE THE SHIP CONTINUE ITS VOYAGE. AS THE CLAIM IS RELATIVELY SMALL, THIS WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE THE MOST ADVANTAGEOUS COURSE OF ACTION.

COMMENT: IN VIEW OF SOVIET SENSITIVITY TO THE POSSIBILITIES FOR PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE NEW CHILEAN REGIME, POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS COULD ENCOURAGE THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT TO CHOOSE INSTEAD A CONFRONTATION ON THE ISSUE OF SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY. THE FACT THAT A CUBAN VESSEL IS PRESENTLY ANCHORED IN GATUM LAKE UNDER ATTACHMENT FOLLOWING A SIMILAR COMPLAINT PRESENTED BY A CHILEAN FIRM MAY HAVE SOME INFLUENCE UPON THE SOVIET DECISION. A REFUSAL TO POST A BOND COULD ALSO PROVOKE THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT TO CONDEMN THE USG FOR ITS POLICY OF "HARASSING INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING," AS THE GOP PROTESTED UPON THE ATTACHMENT OF THE CUBAN SHIP.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SHIP DETENTION, TRADE COMPLAINTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PANAMA05523
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731034/aaaaaytl.tel
Line Count: 94
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Dec-2001 by elbezejf>; APPROVED <13 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ATTACHMENT OF SOVIET SHIP IN THE CANAL ZONE SUMMARY: SOVIET CARGO SHIP WILLIAM FOSTER WAS ATTACHED
TAGS: PFOR, ETRD, PN, PQ, CI, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005